

Internat. Marit. Health, 2008, 59, 1 – 4

16th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON HYPERBARIC MEDICINE (ICHM 2008) BEIJING, CHINA

The 16th International Congress on Hyperbaric Medicine (ICHM 2008) was organized by the Chinese Society on Hyperbaric Medicine and Chinese Medical Association and it was held between 26th and 29th October 2008 in Beijing, China.

The First International Congress on Hyperbaric Medicine was held in Amsterdam in Netherlands in 1963 under the auspices of the Founding President, Professor Ite Boerema. Therefore the ICHM is the oldest organisation of this kind all over the world. The purpose and goal of the Foundation is to promote the triennial Congress and improve understanding among the international hyperbaric medicine community.

As usually during those congresses, invited lectures were given by international experts in the field. D. Bakker (The Netherlands) presented summary of the use of hyperbaric oxygen in necrotising soft tissue infections, as a historical perspective with A.D. 2008 update. P. J. Sheffield (USA) discussed the role of tissue oximetry in assessment of problem wounds. F. J. Cronjé (South Africa) reviewed the use of “Deep Stops” in preventing precordial detectable Doppler bubbles in recreational scuba divers. T. Hengyi (China) gave an overview of Diving and Diving Medicine in China. Y. Mano reported the incidence of DCS in commercial dive works in Japan with evaluation of the profile on multi-level diving by integration of nitrogen accumulation in each body tissue. J. Freier (Germany) tried to answer the important question whether there is a role for HBO in traumatic spinal cord injuries. He also presented the summary of the ongoing prospective study in this field which is currently underway in Germany. W. Gang (China) discussed the problem of HBO therapy in acute traumatic peripheral ischemic diseases, and N. Ko-Chi (China) – usage of HBO in critical disorders. D. Mathieu (France), as a President of the European Committee for Hyperbaric Medicine (ECHM), gave the general overview of a European perspective on Hyperbaric Medicine. There were two invited lectures which were oriented on cellular mechanisms of hyperbaric oxygen: one, given by X. Sun (China), on the protective effect of hyperbaric oxygen preconditioning on ischemia/hypoxia injury, and second, given by S. D. Guthrie (USA) on disruption of viral pathogenesis following patient exposure to

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hyperbaric environments with altered inspired gas mixtures. J. Desola (Spain) presented conclusions from a prospective analysis of 2900 cases of carbon monoxide poisoning, concentrating mostly on clinical findings, common errors and early diagnosis.

The special attention should be paid to the presentation of C. Hammarlund (Sweden), who reported the very first results of a prospective, randomised, double-blind placebo-controlled parallel-group study on the effect of hyperbaric oxygenation on diabetic foot ulcers (the HODFU study). During one year of observation rate of healed ulcers was statistically significantly higher in HBO group as compared to the control group (hyperbaric air). Those results give us a strong support for HBO usage in diabetic foot ulcers with high power of evidences (level A).

In total there were 493 registered delegates from 23 countries and world regions. The total scientific content of the Proceedings book includes 13 invited lectures, 30 oral presentations, 53 posters, and 210 abstracts accepted only for publication. Until now all previous Congresses resulted in hard-cover publications of proceeding books, so we hope that also this time all materials will be available world-wide to all interested professionals.

As usually during the ICHM, there has been a Governors meeting which serves for administrative purposes of the organisation. During this meeting Prof. D. Bakker (The Netherlands), who retired from his professional activity in hyperbaric medicine several years ago, has also resigned from a position of Executive Director of the ICHM and Dr A. Marroni (Italy) took his place. F. Cramer (USA) has also resigned from his position as Treasurer/Secretary and M. Bennet (Australia) has been chosen for this position. This year Z. Sicko (Poland) has been chosen as an ICHM Member-at-large. The next International Congress on Hyperbaric Medicine will be held in Capetown, South Africa between 16th and 19th March 2011. According to tradition, F. Cronje (SA) who is the local organizer, has become the President of the ICHM and will keep this position for 3 years until the next congress.

Nevertheless of high value of scientific content, there were also several optional tours for most interesting places in Beijing and its surroundings: to the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, Mings Tombs and 2008 Olympic Game facilities. All participants have also possibility to taste local specialties.

In summary, the 2008 International Congress on Hyperbaric Medicine in Beijing was very scientifically important and socially interesting meeting.

(Contributed by Jacek Kot from National Center for Hyperbaric Medicine in Gdynia, Poland)